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AUTHOR Lynch, Patrick D.
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ABSTRACT

National development, a worldwide rationale of mass schooling systems, is both economic and social-integrative and supports the human capital paradigm. The social-integrative objective fosters membership in modern systems of state and money exchange that pull people away from traditional ethnic, cultural, regional, or religious allegiances. This paper considers educational supervisors' roles in Guatemala, a developing country in which the linkage between schooling and economic development is still weak, but in which the social-integrative goal is becoming increasingly important. After a lengthy discussion of Guatemala's recent economic and political crises, the paper identifies national security as a motive behind the redirection of education resources from urban Ladinos to rural Indian populations. Because of insufficient resources, primary education was emphasized, while secondary schooling (more closely related to economic development) languished. In fact, failure (through complex examinations) has been used to reduce the number of secondary students; the real failure is a system too small and irrational to accommodate more than a few lower middle class students. In this situation, supervisors' roles have promoted neither efficiency nor fair access. These roles would clash with the reality of extremely limited resources, the norms of accommodating urban middle class Ladinos, and the political agenda of the all-powerful army officers. Supervisors are merely school inspectors with little training and views of Indians as social inferiors. In 1985, a proposal was made to the Ministry of Education to convert supervisor services from inspector to instrumental roles. True reform will not happen until national policy has identified a stronger linkage between the economy and schooling. Included are eight references. (MLH)

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Patrick D. Lynch
Professor
The Pennsylvania State University
318 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814)863-3760

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Supervisors' Roles and the Use of Failure in Guatemala's Schools

National development is a world-wide rationale of mass schooling systems. National development is both economic and social-integrative. These objectives of schooling are explicit in the constitutions, legislative enactments, policy guidelines and planning documents of most countries (Ramirez and Boli, 1987). In order to attain the goal of economic development the human capital paradigm is widely accepted. The social-integrative objective has the aim of socializing the individual as a member of a policy who can participate in a modern economy. This objective is integrative because it fosters membership in modern rational organizations of state and money exchange which pull people away from traditional ethnic, cultural, regional or religious allegiances.

This paper considers the role of supervisors in a developing country, Guatemala, in which the linkage between schooling and economic development is as yet weak, but in which the goal of social integration is recognized and is becoming increasingly important. The weakness of the linkage between the role of supervision and economic development is not uncommon in developing countries. The reasons for this are that the countries' educational policy-makers do not grasp the potential in the supervisor's role for reform in those school systems, or that the linkage between what happens in schools and what is desired as economic-social objectives is not understood by policy makers.

The world-wide wave of qualitative reform of schooling has affected Guatemala with consequences which will be discussed in this paper. In some countries the potential of the supervisors as instruments of the reform is understood, but in other cases, the supervisors are ignored in the plans, with

the consequence that they do not assist the reform and it is slowed. In centralized ministries of education, the supervisors have more power than the school principals, because they are the formal representatives of the minister in the field. They interpret what is going on to the ministry officials, and they affect what goes on in the schools by means of their recommendations to principals and teachers and their yearly reports and evaluations of school system employees. They are not only the eyes and ears of the central ministry, but they are the motive force for whatever changes are underway in the school system. They are the operating force of the ministry in the field. Their importance is recognized by anyone who understands how centralized ministries work, especially in Latin America.

Guatemala is a country which in 1985 had a population of nearly eight million inhabitants (Inter-American Development Bank, 1986). The country is largely rural; 62 percent of the population is so classified. The rural population is Ladino and Indian; 43 percent of the people are Indian of Mayan cultures who speak 23 languages. The Indian people occupy large parts of the western highlands.

Historically, the Ladino people have dominated the economic and political life of the country. The school system has accommodated mostly urban, Ladino students until the 1980's, when a profound shift in policy occurred. But in 1987, Indian people are not yet integrated into the national economic and political life. Illiteracy rates for Indian people in 11 departments range from 65 percent to 93 percent, compared to a range of 15 percent to 57 percent of Ladinos in those political divisions (Development Associates, 1985). The rates for Ladinos are not comforting, either, but the systematic discrimination in educational policy can be observed in those figures.

The government of Guatemala was faced with three major crises in the 1970's. The economic crisis which began with oil price increases and which caused inflationary pressures was similar to that faced by many other developing countries. In 1974, an earthquake in the Central Highlands killed over 20,000 people and damaged the economic infrastructure. In 1977, an insurgency began which shut down schools and government services in much of the same areas affected by the earthquake for prolonged periods. Those dislocations caused massive amounts of resources to be spent on non-education expenditures. And the money which was spent on education had to be spent in ways which would best serve the security of the country.

The country's economic activity was in a downward spiral during the 1980's. The values of its exports, nearly all prime materials, have been declining since 1977, and its external debt has been rising during the same period so that its interest payments and its negative balance of payments have been an increasing drag on its entire economy (Inter-American Development Bank, 1986). The government has sliced all government spending, including that on education in an effort to maintain external credit and internal fiscal stability.

From 1977 to 1981, the insurgency threatened the government's control of rural areas, including those close to the capital. The insurgent forces made a direct appeal to Indian people, few of whom had benefited from schooling or other government services until that time. In the late 1970's, the government decided to increase its spending in the rural areas which had been threatened. Included in the planning for education was attention to a bilingual program for Indian communities which had been supported by the USAID since early in the 1970's. The results of the redirected priorities can be seen in the enrollment statistics. In 1976, 42 percent of the nation's primary school enrollment was in urban public schools, and 44 percent was in rural public

schools (Guatemala Sector Assessment, 1985, p. 126). Private schools served the rest, mostly middle class. By 1984, rural public schools enrolled 52 percent of the nation's primary school students, while the urban public school share of the national enrollment had dropped to 34.4 percent. Large numbers of unschooled primary-age children are evident in spite of some progress. Between 1976 and 1984, the percentage of primary-age children in school rose from 48.5 percent to nearly 60 percent (p. 128).

Quality problems abound in the schools, in spite of the attempts of the Ministry to improve the rural schools. For example, one-half of the first grade rural public school enrolees entered the second grade in 1983, compared to 64 percent of the urban public school first graders (p. 139). In 1979, 159,000 first grade rural public schools students were enrolled; in 1984, 24,300 were enrolled in the sixth grade of those schools. Wastage and repetition are characteristic of all public schools, but far more so of rural public schools than of urban or private schools. Transition rates did not improve much for urban students between 1977 and 1983, but did increase from 44 to 50 for rural students. Achievement of rural children was significantly below that of urban children in mathematics and Spanish in 1982 (p. 149).

The above trends indicate that national security was a motive behind the redirection of the resources spent on education. The government's control of the capital or of other major centers was never seriously threatened, so the government simply transferred a priority from urban to rural education, especially for some Indian people. The proportion of unserved urban children began to rise during the period, apparently because the government believed that it could count on the allegiance of the urban people or that the urban poor were not powerful enough to challenge the military in the cities. The urban poor are mostly Ladino who have migrated to the cities, especially the capital, in search of jobs. The Ladinos are already integrated into the

political life of the country, even though many of them are marginal economically. Hence the integrative goal of the government appears to have been aimed at the Indian populations, still largely rural in the 1980's.

With respect to planning for economic development, the evidence is that schooling is not closely linked to that objective in Guatemala. There have apparently not been enough resources to emphasize the kind of schooling which is most closely related to economic development. Primary education was the main concern during the critical period described; secondary education has languished, and in fact is a disaster area. In 1982, there were 64,000 sixth grade students, and in 1983, there were 52,000 students in the first year of the basic secondary cycle (pp. 124-203). In 1983, of the 124,000 basic cycle (junior high school) secondary students, 117,000 were urban (pp. 205-206). Of the urban students, nearly half were enrolled in public schools, 37 percent in private schools and the remainder in cooperative schools which are supported mainly by private and local public funds with a trace of central government support. Public schools enrolled only 1,900 of the 6,700 rural secondary students, and 2,000 were in cooperative schools. So few rural students attended public secondary school that it could be said that that choice did not exist for rural people. The rural student who wished to pay to attend school would have to go to a city to exercise that option.

According to Meyer, et al., (1979), secondary education affected economic growth in developed and developing counties more powerfully than did primary education for the period 1950-70. The 1980's are quite a different time sample with respect to economic development than the earlier period, and certainly economic growth in developing countries was slower in the later than in the earlier period. But an argument can be made based upon the cited research that a government which intends to link education to economic development must provide a sufficient number of secondary educational places in order to guarantee a pool of middle level technicians for a modernizing economy.

The quality indices of the secondary system are a shock to anyone who attempts to apply rational criteria to secondary schools, but the disastrous economy has worked terrible effects on the system. Under such circumstances what appears to be upside-down logic is applied in an attempt to reduce problems internal to the system. The relationship of the system to society takes a secondary role in such logic. An example is the failure rates in public secondary schools.

In 1983, over 27,000 students were enrolled in the first year of public secondary school, and 8,000 were enrolled in the sixth year (Guatemala Education Sector Assessment, p. 203). Not all the sixth year enrolees would graduate. The very few who entered passed difficult entrance examinations, and were able to pay some fees. So the very poor were not represented, and very few of the upper lower class Ladinos and ony a handful of Indians. In spite of this selection, the wastage through failure was enormous in a very selective system.

Two-thirds of all first year basic cycle public school students were not promoted in 1981. The failure rate for private schools was "only" 48.4 percent (pp. 221-223). Nearly 60 percent of the third year basic cycle public school students were failed the same year. Even in the sixth (last) year of public secondary school, 2,350 or 40 percent, of the 5,800 students were failed! Failure was being used as a device to keep down the numbers of secondary students. It is safer politically to make students believe that they have failed than that the system is too small or too irrational to accommodate more than a handful of lower middle class students. The failure rates are much lower in the private secondary schools, which are attended by middle class students. The examination mechanisms used in the public secondary schools can only be described as invalid with respect to content, depending on memory of the most trivial facts, and using curves intended to fail large proportions of

students. The examination regulations of the ministry are Byzantine in their complexity and stress procedures for handling failure rather than encouraging mastery of material or skills. The main rationale which was offered officially for the large and irrational failure rate was that of "improving quality". That code phrase was easy to invoke because it had such universal usage in the 1980's and was applicable to any kind of reform, whether fair or unfair, destructive or constructive. The elimination of large numbers of able secondary students in the name of improving quality would be acceptable to many critics and observers of education in developed countries as well as those in developing countries, regardless of the impact on the country's future economic capability. And there can be no doubt that that impact will be heavily negative.

The roles of supervisors in such a system have neither been instrumental in promoting efficiency or in promoting fairness of access. Both roles would clash with the reality of extremely limited resources and the norms of accommodating urban Ladinos of the middle classes. Only since the government began to accommodate more Indian rural students in primary schools in the 1980's was equity of access a concern for the previously unserved populations. The supervisors of the primary schools which have become bilingual in order to accommodate more Indian attendance have had to be chosen from a few specially prepared people who were not part of the regular corps of national supervisors. Supervisors have viewed their roles at best as inspecting schools, and their own assessments of their visits were as mostly ritualistic and monitoring (Development Associates, pp. 167-171). They have stated that their effectiveness was limited by lack of resources to allow them to visit schools or of materials to offer teachers or principals when they did reach a school, and the assignment of too many schools to each supervisor to visit in one or even two years. In four regions, the ratio of supervisor

to teachers ranged from 1/125 to 1/322. The ratio of supervisors to schools ranged from 1/48 to 1/91. They mentioned the conflicting political agendas of the Ministry of Education and the army officers who were the real power in the country. In every discussion of the supervisors' roles whether by supervisors themselves or outside observers, the lack of training for the role played a prominent part. Supervisors literally did not know what to do before they became supervisors, and so learned their roles on the job from each other amidst the leanest of conditions, and without any formal inservice help.

The structure of the MOE combined with lack of resources created another pathology in that organization. Decisions on important matters are not usually made at the intermediate levels of a very centralized ministry organization. Decisions often wait until someone can talk to an official in the ministry. Transfers of teachers, replacements of teachers who are scandals to the community, or who are chronic absentees or who are seriously ill, all wait for months until the central organization acts. All requisitions of supplies take so long to fill that teachers ordinarily buy supplies out of their own meager salaries, or pupils buy a few supplies. The queuing of petitioners visible in the corridors of many Latin American ministries of education has been noted by Hanson (1986, pp. 18-19) as a continuation of a custom of the Spanish colonial governments. Decision making has not been encouraged at intermediate or lower levels of any government organization in the country. There is at the present time the possibility of a reform which does allocate more responsibility to the department level, but that is only in its planning stages. The norms of the Ministry which are to delay decision making is further enhanced by resource scarcity which sees tardiness in answering to school needs as a virtue of delaying spending as long as necessary, even for essentials.

The ideology of the school system is so far congruent with the Ladinos' perceptions that its purpose is to transmit knowledge and to socialize children into the Ladino view of the country (Development Associates, pp. 176-178). The supervisors' perceptions are those of the prevailing Ladino views which see the Indians not as equals in society but as inferior people who are an economic drain and a socially disruptive force. The Indians' perceptions of the system are that it is to teach their children Spanish and to socialize their children into a Ladino-controlled society in which Indian cultural values are denied. The lack of success of Indian students in the schools system is not surprising given these perceptions. The relationships between supervisors and Indian communities are, unsurprisingly, non-existent. The success stories among the Indians who survive the system are those about children who are willing to acculturate and urbanize. The clash between cultures is one as old as the coming of the Spaniard in Guatemala. There has never been a national ideology of pride in Indian heritage or acceptance of the mestizo racial combination as in Mexico. Only now after a nearly disastrous military struggle has the national government come to value the participation of the Indian in national life, with the necessity of opening schools to the Indian children. The supervisors are not entirely in harmony with this policy, and that is in part what the comtemplated reform of decentralization is about. A country as poor and as vulnerable as Guatemala (Nicaragua's Sandinistas will certainly return to their earlier policy of helping the Guerrilla bands in the Highlands if the Contras become inactive) cannot afford a corps of supervisors who do not accept the integration of a large number of people into the national life.

Roles such as clinical supervisors, resource persons to teachers who function as technicians, group counselors, and materials resource experts are unknown so far to the supervisors in Guatemala, or are impossible, given the

structure of the system and the expectation that the supervisors inspect and report on a sample of teachers each year (See Mosher and Purpel, 1972, or Lewis and Miel, 1972, for discussions of supervisory roles in schools). These developmental roles would aid the objectives of efficiency and effectiveness in schools but the Ministry would have to reorganize itself and identify system goals for the schools before supervisors could begin to understand such roles, or to assume them. Efficient schools which allow most students to complete the cycle in the expected number of years, or effective schools which promote mastery of knowledge or skills by most students, are objectives which relate to national budgetary efficiency and economic growth. National educational policy in a centralized ministry country must identify these system goals as desirable and then restructure the supervisory system to aid these goals, if the system goals are to become a reality. A radical role shift would have to be created for the supervisors to shift from observers and inspectors to that of an instrumental role to help principals and teachers improve efficiency and effectiveness. More simply that means that national educational policy has to be aimed at helping students stay in school to learn rather than to keep failure rates high in order to keep educational spending low. Wastage of money inherent in high drop-out rates and failure must be acknowledged to be damaging to national policies of integration and participation for Ladinos and Indians, harmful for national security, and a serious drain on the national budget.

A proposal was made to the Ministry of Education in 1985 to reorganize supervisory services and to change them from inspector to instrumental roles. It was to require decentralization of decision making about how to help schools from the ministry level in the capital to the region and department levels (Development Associates, pp. 2-4). It would require formal inservice training for supervisors, and would redirect their roles to those of helping

teachers and principals promote instructional outcomes. The knowledge of curriculum planning and evaluation required of supervisors as a result would create a new kind of expertise in their ranks. The proposal would further require supervisors to work with communities so as to sensitize them to the perceptions that people have of shcools and what people want from schools for their children. That process would redirect the supervisors' attention from the metropole to the region. Certainly, more resources would be required of the system for this kind of supervision than the existing one of reporting on a sample of teachers' compliance with the Plan de Estudios.

The recognition of the rationale for such a shift in role and function was made explicit in the document. The rationale was that the purpose of supervision was to help schools foster national economic and social development, by helping schools become more efficient and effective. It was also evident in the document that at least some in the MOE desired this kind of change. The structural changes in the Ministry would be profound but would move the central ministry into one of a promotional role instead of one which attempted to control every move of every employee. That span of control has become increasingly difficult and expensive as the nation schools more children and accommodates a larger variety of roles for schooling. The Guatemalan Ministry of Education is an excellent example of a ministry that has attempted many types of experiments through the past 20 years. Each of these has a bureaucratic residual in the form of a special office concerned with the particular reform or innovation, reporting on the pilot schools involved to the minister and the outside agency which sponsored and helped to finance the innovation. The maze of these offices, each with a special nonsense acronym, is complex and puzzling. Hence, the ministry has grown through demography and attempted reform into a large bureaucracy. The central ministry officials know that they must decentralize if the main work of the

system is to get done, that is the teaching of students. It remains to be seen whether this proposed reform which is to be carried out in four pilot regions over the next five years will merely result in another residual acronym in the ministry or whether it will be the beginning of a system-wide reform of supervision.

Guatemala is an example of a country in which there has been little or no conscious linkage between national economic development and the role of supervision. There are other reasons than those mentioned above. There has been little evidence of the integration of planning of economic growth with planning for education. Education has been treated as a consumer good rather than as an investment in human capital. Only since the insurgency has the potential of schooling for social integration or equity been grasped or accepted even minimally. And national security has been the reason for that policy development. Educational reform for national security reasons is not uncommon and is a powerful stimulus (Ramirez and Boli, 1987) as we well know in the United States. The relationship of economic growth to national security with the conditions for economic growth which must be present in the pool of educated people has yet to be demonstrated in the country's planning. The supervisory system can only be an instrument of national policy which has identified the linkages, however loose, between the economy and schooling. Once these linkages are identified, supervisors are a logical powerful instrumentality for reforming schooling to become more efficient, and thereby more fair, to the poor and marginal people. And they are essential for transforming schooling into an effective institution in which the poor have a chance to learn during their attendance at this all-powerful modernization mechanism.

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